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ABSTRACT

This survey, conducted by the Association of Community College Trustees, investigated the political aspects of community college trusteeship, focusing on elected and appointed trustees' political involvement, interactions, influences, and relationship to the political structure and parties in the states where they served as trustees. A total of 5,204 surveys were mailed to trustees on local governing boards--3,180 surveys were mailed to appointed trustees and 1,852 surveys to elected trustees. The response rate to the survey was 36% (1,901 respondents). The survey results revealed some small differences between elected and appointed trustees as well as among trustees with different demographic characteristics. Trustees who were more involved in political parties, younger, female, and had fewer years of service on the board tended to have a higher political activity or a more 'activist" approach. Elected trustees also reported being somewhat more interested than appointed trustees in future political offices. Despite these small differences, the study found that, overall, community college trustees were strongly motivated to provide service to their communities. They tended to have track records of prior community leadership and they felt most accountable to the citizens of the college region and to the current students at the colleges. (GC)

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# The Political Nature of Community College Trusteeship

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Association of Community College Trustees

Summer, 2001

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# Introduction and Background

Trustees operate in a political environment. They balance needs and desires from the community, students, state legislatures, federal agencies, and college employees. They work with elected officials and local, state, and federal legislative and executive branches, making decisions that affect the mission, funding, and operations of the colleges.

Ideally, trustees are qualified lay people who fulfill their responsibility for governing the college unencumbered by single interests or agendas. They are able to build strong relationships with key constituents, civic leaders, elected officials, and other policy makers. They weigh various influences in the environment and make decisions that serve the public good.

The political nature of trusteeship also means influencing policy decisions in the community and at the state and federal levels. Trustees play an important advocacy role for their colleges to ensure that institutions have public support and funding, and that laws and regulations create an environment in which they can succeed.

In recent decades, political pressures on colleges appear to have become stronger. Legislatures in many states have increased their expectations. Political, ethnic, and religious groups in many communities have become more vocal. Businesses, in order to remain competitive, have increased demands for training and assistance. Trustees find themselves in the position of needing to respond to a wider variety of influences.

At the same time, there has been increased attention to the governance of community colleges. In recent years, governors and legislatures have changed the way community colleges and/or universities were governed in states such as New Jersey, Kentucky, and Florida. In some cases, more responsibility has devolved to local communities. In others, state-level agencies or boards have gained authority. Questions also have been raised about the trustees who serve on the boards. Do they come to their position unencumbered by single-interest agendas? Is there more influence by special interest groups on elections and appointments? Are trustees more partisan? Are there more "activist" trustees than in the past?

Political party influence may be strong—appointment to a political position may depend on party loyalty. Funds from political parties may be used to support the campaigns of elected trustees.

Special interests may also influence appointments and elections. Faculty associations and unions, religious groups, neighborhood associations, chambers of commerce and other business leaders, and racial and ethnic groups may want trustees

on boards who will promote their interests. Many of those groups have the funds to support elections and the power to influence appointments.

Examples of political influences on community college trustees include:

- College presidents from around the country reported that today's trustees are more likely than past trustees to play an "activist" role – to push for programs and services that benefit specific community groups or employees (Boggs and Smith, 1997)
- In 1998, the newly elected governor of Florida replaced 203 out of the 209 community college trustees.
- Interviews with newly elected trustees in California over a five-year period revealed that key factors in being elected included a convincing campaign effort, strong ties to the community, written ballot statements, and union support. Campaigns and ballot statements cost money: in California, employee unions are a major source of election funds (Giles, 1999)
- The Association of Governing Boards adopted a statement in 2001 that calls on trustees to thoughtfully consider external voices, but to resist external pressures to respond to narrow interests and purely political or ideological agendas, or to use their trusteeship inappropriately to advance personal aspirations or goals (AGB, 2001)

Questions have also been raised whether the different politics involved in the election or appointment process are more likely to result in trustees who more effectively serve the greater public good. One perspective claims that elected trustees are more influenced by special interests and are more likely to attempt to manage college activities to meet those interests. Another perspective is that appointed trustees are less likely to be responsive to people in their community and are more beholden to the politicians or parties that put them in the position. However, there is no evidence that one approach results in more effective boards than the other.

## Purpose of the Study

Given the above issues and concerns, we decided to investigate the political aspects of community college trusteeship. We focused on elected and appointed trustees' political involvement, interactions, influences, and relationship to the political structure and parties in the states where they serve as trustees. The study and survey instrument were designed to explore the following questions:

- What political factors and influences motivate trustees to seek election or appointment?
- What political support did trustees need and use to get elected or appointed?
- How do trustees communicate and advocate with politicians and governmental officials on community college issues?
- What are the political backgrounds and ambitions of the trustees?
- What are the attitudes about the use of political influence?

- Are there differences based on trustee characteristics and between elected and appointed trustees?

## Local Boards

The first part of the study involved updating the information about the election and appointing processes of local boards of trustees. ACCT developed a comprehensive description of national appointing and election processes, summarized below (see Appendix A for the chart of local boards by state).

Community colleges are governed by local boards of trustees in 36 states:

| | |
|---|---|
| 13 states | Elected boards |
| 19 states | Appointed boards |
| 4 states | Both elected and appointed boards or members |

In states with appointed boards, the appointing authority is:

| | |
|---|---|
| 7 states | Governor |
| 6 states | Local officials |
| 5 states | Combination of state and local officials |
| 1 state | State board |

## The Survey

The surveys were intended for all trustees on locally elected or appointed boards for community colleges in the 36 states with local governing boards (we did not include boards with primarily an advisory role). States without local governing boards were: Alabama, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, and Vermont. Trustees on state boards were not included in the survey.

Each state was queried to determine whether they use an election or appointment process. In states where both methods of selection are used, community college association leaders and trustees at individual institutions provided information on selection. Trustee names were then matched to institution, and they were mailed the appropriate survey.

The Association of Community College Trustees mailed surveys to 5204 trustees on local governing boards that were members of the association. A total of 3180 surveys were mailed to appointed trustees; 1852 surveys to member trustees who were elected to their positions. Seventy-five surveys were mailed to non-member board chairs and presidents of institutions where board members are appointed; 97 surveys were sent to non-member board chairs and presidents of institutions with elected trustees. These board chairs and presidents were asked to distribute the survey to members of their boards.

The overall response rate to the survey was 36.5% (1,901 respondents), with 36.4% of the appointed trustees responding (1,184) and 36.7% of the elected trustees (717). Based on statistical probability, the margin of error for appointed trustees is less than 2% and for elected trustees it is less than 2%. The margins are higher for smaller subgroups.

### Survey Instrument

Two questionnaires were developed by the researchers for use in this study and are included in this report as Appendix B. The instrument titled "The Politics of Community College Trusteeship—Elected" consisted of 32 items. The instrument was divided into five parts: Demographic Profile (7 items), Elections and Campaigns (8 items), Political Activity (4 items), Board-Community-College Relations (4 items), and Opinions and Attitudes (9 items). Many of the items had numerous subparts. Responses to all items and subparts totaled 102.

The second instrument was "The Politics of Community College Trusteeship-Appointed." It consisted of 28 items divided into 5 parts; Demographic Profile (7 items), Appointment Process (6 items), Political Activity (4 items), Board-Community-College Relations (4 items), and Opinions and Attitudes (7 items). Responses to all items and subparts on this survey form totaled 101.
Both surveys were developed by the researchers after reviewing other studies of community college trustees. (Petty and Piland, 1985; Whitmore, 1987; Stevens and Piland, 1997). The researchers designed items to provide answers to each research question. Each researcher responded to various drafts of the instrument, making suggestions for change.

### Pilot Study

Both questionnaires were administered to a group of trustees at an ACCT board of directors meeting in February 1999. Trustees answered the questions and provided feedback on the instrument to one of the researchers. Minor changes to a number of items were made after this field test.

### Data Collection Procedures

The questionnaires, accompanied by a cover letter explaining the purpose of the survey and signed by the president of ACCT were sent to elected and appointed trustees. A stamped, return envelope, with a return address of Palomar College in California, was also attached to the questionnaires. Completed surveys were then sent to the Office of Institutional Research at the college.

### Data Analysis

Initially frequencies and percentages were calculated for all items on the questionnaire. Means were calculated for the Likert leaning items on the instrument. Finally, chi squares and ANOVAS were determined using the SPSS program to establish significant difference based on the variable of elected or appointed and

selected demographic variables. An Alpha level of .05 was set to determine significance.

## Survey Results

The results are presented in formats designed to highlight the most important information or largest percent of responses in each category. Overall, there are far more similarities than differences between elected and appointed trustees. The significant differences that do appear are a matter of degree, rather than being opposite characteristics or opinions.

### Demographics

The respondents were asked to provide some demographic information, including gender, age, time on board, political party, and political leaning. Table 1 includes the largest category in each group.

**Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents (numbers are percentages)**

| Characteristic | Appointed Trustees | Elected Trustees |
|---|---|---|
| Gender | 68 Male | 65 Male |
| Age | 64 55 years and older | 66 55 years and older |
| Time on board | 73 Less than 10 years | 64 Less than 10 years |
| Political party | 47 Democrat | 52 Republican |
| Political leaning | 39 Moderate | 38 Moderate |

Both appointed and elected trustees are primarily male, over 55 years of age, and politically moderate. Elected trustees have more years on the board and are more likely to be Republican. Appointed trustees are somewhat more likely to be Democrats than Republicans, but in spite of that, they report that they are slightly more conservative in their political leanings.

### Motivations for Seeking the Position

The most important reasons that motivated both appointed and elected trustees to seek appointment or election were to: 1) serve the community, 2) serve the college, and 3) improve programs for students.

Other motives were generally not important, including experiencing political office, gaining visibility, and preparing for other political offices. However, although the total percentages were small, more elected trustees than appointed trustees selected "to address a problem in the institution, experience political office, and prepare for other political office." Appointed trustees more than elected trustees selected "to serve the community and the college, and strengthen ties to political supporters."

| Table 2. Motivations for seeking the position. (The numbers indicate the percent of people who checked certain levels: only the highest percentage is included.) | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Reason** | **Appointed** | **Elected** |
| Serve the community | Very important 89.1 | Very important 84.6 |
| Serve the college(s) | Very important 82.5 | Very important 80.0 |
| Improve programs for students | Very important 71.9 | Very important 72.6 |
| Address a problem in the institution | Not important 56.5 | Not important 55.2 |
| Strengthen ties to appointing authority/electorate | Not important 78.2 | Not important 84.2 |
| Gain visibility in the community | Not important 77.1 | Not important 77.6 |
| Experience political office | Not important 89.9 | Not important 77.2 |
| Prepare for other political office | Not important 96.8 | Not important 91.7 |

## Seeking the Position

Appointed trustees

The appointing process for trustees varies greatly from state to state. However, even in states where the appointing authority is at the state government level, it is often important to have support of local officials to be appointed. Appointed trustees report the entity with the most influence in the appointing process is:

- 31.5% - county or regional government official
- 19.2% - governor
- 11.8% - state legislator
- Responses with less than 10% include country board of education, political party committee, city or town government official, and state department of education official.

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of support from four different sources: 78.7% of the appointed trustees reported that support from community leaders was "somewhat or very important;" 54.6%, political party leadership; 52.9%, college administration; and 44.4%, state legislators. Only about one in 10 trustees reported that being appointed to the board was a very competitive process; two-thirds reported that their candidacy for appointment was not endorsed by any group.

Elected trustees

Most trustees (77%) reported that they were not approached by representatives from political parties or interest groups to run for a board seat and most (74%) indicated there was no political party involvement in their candidacy. The level of opposition in the trustees' races was identified as "none" or "weak" by slightly over one-half of the elected trustees.

Elected trustees were asked to identify methods they used in their campaign. A little over 40% used flyers, posters, advertising or time in the media. Other methods included telephone calls (30%), mass mailings (24.7%), walking precincts (23.3%), letters to the editor (20.3) and "other" (28%). Over 57% were not endorsed by any group. Of those that received endorsements: 25% were from newspapers, 16.5% by employee organizations, 9% by a special interest group, and 7.9% by a political party. Just over 50% of the trustees checked that they used only their own funds for their election campaigns; over one-third were supported by contributions by individuals.

## Achieving the Position

Trustees checked a variety of factors as reasons for getting the trustee position (see Table 3). Prior leadership in the community was the most common reason checked by both elected and appointed trustees. "Experience in education" had the same level of importance for both groups; however, more appointed trustees indicated experience in business was important.

About half of the appointed trustees also checked "recommendations from people with connections" as a reason for their appointment. A third of the respondents checked their relationship with the appointing authority and recommendations from other board members. About a third of the elected trustees credited their exposure in the campaign process. Few of the trustees checked financial support – either contributions to the appointing authority or contributions to campaigns.

**Table 3. Reasons for being Appointed or Elected (numbers are the percentage that checked the reason).**

| Reason | Appointed | Elected |
|---|---|---|
| Prior leadership in community | 79.9 | 78.1 |
| Experience in business | 51.9 | 39.6 |
| Recommendations from people with connections to appointing authority | 51.1 | Not applicable |
| Experience in education | 47.0 | 48.5 |
| Prior relationship with appointing authority | 34.7 | Not applicable |
| Recommendations from other board members and college personnel | 31.1 | Not applicable |
| More exposure than other candidates | Not applicable | 32.4 |
| Weak or no opposition | Not applicable | 30.2 |
| Extensive campaign | Not applicable | 16.8 |
| Active in political party | 23.2 | 9.5 |
| Made contributions to party or campaign of appointing authority | 5.3 | Not applicable |
| Financial support from organized groups | Not applicable | 3.5 |

The above data lead to suppositions that both appointed and elected trustees rely on their reputation as community leaders to achieve their position, followed by their experience. Appointed trustees are somewhat more likely to rely on or require support from key people who may influence the appointing process, including party politicians. Elected trustees rely on the electoral process, but for the most part do not campaign extensively. Neither group credits their success to financial contributions.

## Accountability

We asked respondents to rank the level of accountability they feel to a number of different entities. Table 4 provides highlights of the results. While there are differences in percentages, large majorities of both appointed and elected trustees felt they were very accountable to current students, the citizens of the college's region, future students, other members of the board and college employees. Somewhat less importance was attached to citizens of the state, businesses and other employers, the appointing authority, regional and local governments, those who supported the appointment, state government, and transfer universities.

Overall, elected trustees indicated higher degrees of accountability to more groups (current and future students, college employees, local employers, citizens of the region, transfer institutions, federal and state government). Appointed trustees checked "citizens of the state" and "regional/local governments" more often.

**Table 4. To Whom or What are Trustees Accountable. (The numbers represented the percentage or those that indicated somewhat accountable (S) and very accountable (V))**

| Entity | Appointed | Elected |
|---|---|---|
| Current students | S 11.8 V 85.3 | S 5.5 V 94.3 |
| Citizens of the college's region | S 17.7 V 79.1 | S 8.1 V 90.5 |
| Electorate | Not applicable | S 12.1 V 86.6 |
| Future students | S 19.7 V 76.4 | S 18.3 V 81.1 |
| Other members of the board | S 20.1 V 75.3 | S 24.0 V 72.7 |
| College employees | S 24.5 V 69.7 | S 25.1 V 73.2 |
| Citizens of the state | S 30.8 V 57.0 | S 43.0 V 44.3 |
| Businesses and other employers | S 42.7 V 46.2 | S 43.0 V 51.6 |
| Appointing authority | S 45.5 V 37.8 | Not applicable |
| Regional and local governments | S 50.0 V 36.0 | S 54.8 V 27.5 |
| Those who supported the appointment | S 46.9 V 27.3 | Not applicable |
| State government | S 43.7 V 25.0 | S 49.3 V 27.9 |
| Transfer colleges and universities | S 51.2 V 21.7 | S 57.6 V 28.0 |
| Federal government | S 27.4 V 7.4 | S 44.2 V 11.3 |
| Those who funded campaigns | Not applicable | S 24.6 V 6.4 |

Both appointed and elected trustees identified the same two groups when asked to indicate to whom or what they were most accountable:

- Citizens of the college region: 32.6% (appointed) and 38.4% (elected)
- Current students: 22.8% (appointed); 25.3% (elected)

However, the rankings changed below the top two: 19.5% of elected trustees indicated they were most accountable to voters; no other entity received more than 2.3%.

The third option for appointed trustees was state government, with 9.0%, followed closely by regional and local government (8.0%) and appointing authority (6.6%). All other options chosen by appointed trustees were less than 5%. These data indicate that both elected and appointed trustees feel accountable mainly to their local communities, students, and each other, and to a much lesser extent to political entities.

### Sources of Information

Table 5 indicates that trustees rely on a wide variety of sources for information and advice related to their decision making. College administrators, other trustees on the board, students, and college faculty members have the most influence, followed closely by individual community members, state associations, and ACCT. Groups with reputations for strong political influence, including unions, financial supporters, and appointing authorities are not generally important sources of information.

**Table 5. Sources of Information and Advice (percentages reflect those who indicate they "somewhat and very much" rely on the entity)**

| Entity | Appointed | Elected |
|---|---|---|
| College administrators | 96.6 | 98.6 |
| Other trustees on the board | 96.5 | 96.9 |
| Students | 89.7 | 93.1 |
| College faculty members | 87.1 | 92.0 |
| Individual community members | 76.8 | 87.9 |
| The state trustee or college association | 76.5 | 81.4 |
| ACCT (Association of Community College Trustees) | 71.3 | 74.3 |
| AACC (American Association of Community Colleges) | 55.3 | 59.8 |
| Employee associations or unions | 42.7 | 58.9 |
| The individual or body that appointed you to the board | 38.3 | Not applicable |
| Individuals or groups that supported your appointment | 34.8 | Not applicable |
| Those who funded your campaign | Not applicable | 13.2 |

Given that trustees feel most accountable to the community and students and that they rely on college administrators and faculty for much information, it is important that college staff ensure that advice to trustees reflects community and student needs.

There are some differences between appointed and elected trustees related to whom they relied on for information. As in the "accountability" question, elected trustees tended to have a wider range of sources of information and were somewhat more likely to rely on college administrators, students, faculty, community members, state trustee association and employee unions.

The final question in this category dealt with how much influence political implications had on trustee decision-making. Over 78% of both appointed and elected trustees stated political implications had little or no influence; there were no significant differences between the two groups.

## Involvement in the Political System

Trustees can play a role in influencing government educational policy. One set of questions on the survey explored how trustees communicate with politicians and governmental officials on community college issues. A second set explored how politically active they considered themselves.

**Table 6. Percent of Trustees who Communicate with Politicians and Officials at least four times a year**

| Entity | Appointed | Elected |
|---|---|---|
| City or county officials | 66.1 | 56.1 |
| Local elected politicians | 62.9 | 57.8 |
| State elected politicians | 56.1 | 57.0 |
| State agency officials | 39.2 | 36.5 |
| Federal elected politicians | 17.3 | 25.8 |
| Federal agency officials | 9.4 | 12.5 |

Both appointed and elected trustees communicated most often with local officials and politicians. Appointed trustees are somewhat more likely than elected trustees to do so, while elected trustees are somewhat more likely to communicate with federal level people.

Trustees also influence local state and national policy through their political activity. Table 7 indicates the extent to which trustees considered themselves politically active. The comparative level of activity between the two groups is similar; however, overall, appointed trustees are slightly more active in politics and elections and had prior experience seeking or serving in another office.

Another way of looking at political activity is to consider the political backgrounds and ambitions of trustees. Trustees who served in other elected or appointed office prior to service on the board include 57.9% of appointed trustees and 50.6% of elected trustees. Less than 10% of the respondents indicated they might seek other political positions in the relatively near future (see Table 8), with elected trustees being slightly more interested in doing so.

| Table 7. Political Activity of Trustees (Numbers are percentages of "somewhat active" and "very active") | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Activity** | **Appointed** | **Elected** |
| Local elections | 72.9 | 71.3 |
| Local politics | 69.2 | 67.4 |
| State elections | 62.9 | 60.1 |
| State politics | 61.7 | 59.1 |
| National elections | 48.2 | 48.0 |
| National politics | 43.9 | 43.6 |

| Table 8. Interest in Other Political Office in the Next Six Years (Numbers are percentages that indicated interest) | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Activity** | **Appointed** | **Elected** |
| City or town council | 7.4 | 9.5 |
| County government board | 8.5 | 7.9 |
| State legislator | 4.9 | 9.8 |
| State executive branch | .8 | 1.2 |
| Congress | 1.0 | 2.5 |

## Attitudes and Opinions

We asked a number of questions related to trustees opinions about involvement in politics, responsiveness to political pressures, quality of leadership, and use of the position as a step toward other political office. We also asked about attitudes toward community college educators serving on governing boards.

Importance of Political Involvement

Almost 90% of appointed trustees and 84% of elected trustees thought it somewhat to very important that trustees are involved in the local political scene (a significant difference). Over 87% of appointed and 86% of elected trustees thought it important to be involved in the state political scene. At the national level, 51.4% of appointed and 59.4% of elected trustees thought it important to be involved (again a significant difference).

Responsiveness to Political Influence

About 40% of trustees thought that appointed and elected trustees are equally responsive to political pressure. However, 9.6% of appointed and 35.1% of elected trustees thought appointed trustees are more responsive to political pressure; 42.8% of appointed trustees and 19.1% of elected trustees thought elected trustees are more responsive to political pressure. Each group was more likely to think those in the other group were more responsive to political pressure than themselves.

Quality of Leadership

57.5% of appointed trustees and 49.2% of elected trustees do not believe that the quality of leadership depends on whether the board is appointed or elected. However, 36.2% of appointed and 2.5% of elected trustees think appointed boards of

trustees provide better leadership for the college than elected boards; 3.1% of appointed trustees and 45.0% of elected trustees think elected boards of trustees provide better leadership for the college than appointed boards. Each group was more likely to think its own group provided better leadership for the college.

Trustee Position as a Stepping Stone

When asked if the position as a trustee should serve as a stepping stone to another political office, 3.2% of appointed trustees and 7.3% of elected trustees said yes; 80.9% and 67.4% respectively said no, and the remainder were not sure. A minority of elected trustees was more likely to see the position as preparation for further office.

Educators as Trustees

About 25% of the board members in the nation are educational professionals. (Vaughn and Weisman, 1997. This is an increase from 20% reported by Whitmore in 1987). There are different opinions on whether or not this is good practice, particularly in regard to community college educators. On one hand, educators are certainly aware of the needs and issues in education. On the other hand, they may be too close to the issues and not reflect other important economic, business, and other social needs and issues in the community. Given these issues, we asked trustees to indicate their level of support for certain aspects of having educators on the board.

31.5% of appointed trustees and 40.6% of elected trustees supported or strongly supported the practice of former college employees serving on their college boards. 30.4% of appointed trustees and 30.9% of elected trustees opposed or strongly opposed the practice.

There was less support for the practice of employees of one community college serving on another community college board: 13.9% of appointed trustees and 22% of elected trustees supported or strongly supported this practice, while 61.8% of appointed trustees and 51.2% of elected trustees opposed or strongly opposed it.

Political Position

And finally, we asked if being a community college trustee is a political position. 16.8% of appointed trustees and 41.4% of elected trustees thought the position was often or very political. 46.5% of appointed trustees and 15.4% of elected trustees think the position is not or slightly political.

Even though there are not many significant differences in many indicators of "political-ness," such as to whom trustees feel accountable, whom they rely on for information and advice in their decisions, and how politically active they are, appointed and elected trustees perceive the position differently. Perhaps it is the process of running for election that influences elected trustees to see it as a more political position. Even though appointed trustees often rely on political influence in

obtaining the position, the political activity isn't as visible—therefore they may not see themselves as politicians.

## The Effects of Demographics

The results reported above found that there were far more similarities than differences between appointed and elected trustees, and that the differences were matters of degree. This section looks more closely at a number of differences in the responses to the survey that are related to the following demographic characteristics of trustees. Again, the differences we found are a matter of degree, rather than being opposite characteristics:

- Gender
- Age
- Length of time on the board
- Political party
- Strength of political party affiliation
- Political leaning (moderate, conservative, liberal)

We also analyzed the results from states with large numbers of trustees, and therefore a large proportion of responses, to see how they compared with the overall results. Table 10 highlights a summary of the statistically significant differences based on the demographics described above.

**Table 10. Number of Items with Statistically Significant Differences**

| Elected Trustees (100 Items Total) | Variable | Appointed Trustees (91 Items Total) |
|---|---|---|
| 43 | Gender | 33 |
| 43 | Political party membership | 29 |
| 40 | Years on board | 19 |
| 38 | Strength of political party identification | 44 |
| 31 | Age | 36 |
| 30 | Political leaning | 9 |
| 39 | Big states vs. others | Not applicable |
| Not applicable | No. Carolina vs. others | 32 |

As can be seen from Table 10, many demographic variables impacted trustee responses. Gender, political party membership, and number of years on the board had the largest number of significant differences for elected trustees, while strength of political party affiliation, age, and gender had the biggest influence on appointed trustee responses. Gender is the one variable that appears in the top three for elected and appointed trustees. Political leaning had the fewest number of items that had differences, for elected and appointed trustees.

The average (mean) number of differences in the elected trustee group for all variables (38) was substantially higher than for appointed trustees (29). This finding suggests that elected trustees' opinions on the items in our survey vary more than the

opinions of appointed trustees. Yet, it is interesting to note that the range of items with significant differences for elected trustees was narrower (30% to 43%) than for appointed trustees (10% to 48%).

The following highlights the differences based on demographics within the elected and appointed trustee groups.

### Motivations for Seeking the Position

For both appointed and elected trustees, over 80% of the trustees stated that serving the community and the college were very important reasons to seek or accept a position on the board; over 70% in each group checked "improve programs for students." Other reasons were for the most part not important. However, there were some differences in each group.

Appointed trustees over 55 more often selected "to serve the college," (99%) while trustees under age 55 tended to more often select "experience political office," "gain visibility in the community", and "prepare for other political office."

Within the elected trustee group, younger trustees with less board service tended to choose "to experience political office" (32%) more than trustees with less board experience (18%). Trustees who had few years of board experience, were Democrats, and identified themselves as liberal tended to run for the board "to address a problem at the college."

### Seeking the Position

The processes for seeking appointed and running for election vary significantly from state to state and are not easy to compare. However, within the groups, the following similarities and differences were found.

Appointed Trustees

The individual or agency that has the most influence in appointment to the board was remarkably similar regardless of trustee demographics and characteristics—32% reported a county or regional government official; 20%, the state governor; and 12%, a state legislator.

The only difference related to who had the most influence was based on the number of years on the board. The newest board members identified a "state legislator" as most influential more than experienced board members did and the most experienced board members selected "county or regional governmental official" as most influential more often than other board members.

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of support from four different sources—79% of all appointed trustees rated community leaders' support as important. There were few differences based on demographics. The most differences

were between trustees from North Carolina compared to trustees from other states. North Carolina trustees indicated receiving very strong support from "community leaders" (90%) while other states' trustees received strong support from "state legislators." Given that North Carolina has by far the most appointed trustees, and that the majority of each board is appointed by local officials, the overall results may have been influenced by the relatively large proportion of North Carolina responses.

Facing competition from other potential appointees demonstrated significant differences based on age and years on the board. Younger and less experienced board members indicated they faced a "very competitive" situation more so than older and more experienced board members did.

Elected Trustees

Most campaigns (74%) were nonpartisan, and no one method of campaigning was used by a majority of the trustees. However, the methods of campaigning varied by gender, years on the board and size of state. In general, more women, more of the less experienced board members, and more trustees in large states used a wide variety of campaigning methods (telephoning, walking precincts, using posters, and conducting mass mailings).

While fewer than half of all elected trustees received formal endorsements in their campaigns, there were many differences, based on most of the variables used in this study, for being endorsed by some organization or group. Most of these differences were concerned with being endorsed by an employee organization or union, followed by being endorsed by a political party. Primarily, females and Democrats who identified strongly with their political parties were endorsed by these organizations.

Sources of financial support varied—most differences depended on size of state (trustees in larger states had more different sources of financial support) and gender (with females having more varied forms of financial support, except for "their own" funds).

## Achieving the Position

Appointed and elected trustees achieve their positions in varied ways, but there were some major similarities between the two groups related to the reasons they felt they achieved the position: most credited "prior leadership in the community" as an important cause.

Appointed Trustees

Almost 80% of appointed trustees stated they achieved their position through "prior leadership in the community;" over half checked "experience in business" and "recommendations from key people as reasons" and almost half indicated "experience in education" as reasons for achieving their positions. Less than a quarter checked

"active in the political party" and only 5% checked "making contributions". However, there are differences in the reasons based on strength of political party identification and years on the board. Trustees who selected "strong political party affiliation" tended to select "active in political party" and "made contributions to the party" as reasons for achieving this position more than other trustees. Finally, trustees with "moderate" party affiliation tended to select "recommendations from board members or college personnel" more so than other trustees. Also, trustees with more board experience selected "experience in business" and "knowing people with connections."

The few differences for reasons appointed trustees say they were chosen revolved around political party membership, strength of political party identification, and political leaning. Republicans tended to select "active in political party" and "experience in business" while Democrats selected "experience in education." Trustees who identified strongly with their political party responded to the following reasons for appointment, "active in political party", "experience in business", and "made political contributions." Finally, liberals choose "experience in education", while conservatives chose "experience in business."

Elected Trustees

Like appointed trustees, elected trustees believed that "prior leadership in the community" and "experience in education" were important reasons for achieving the position; experience in education was less so. Receiving more exposure and running an extensive campaign were checked by a minority of trustees, while "being active in the political party was checked by only 10% and financial support from organized groups was indicated by only 2%.

Table 11 summarizes differences in elected trustees related to demographics.

**Table 11. Demographics Differences Among Elected Trustees: Reasons for Achieving the Position**

| Reason for being elected | More often selected by |
|---|---|
| Leadership in community | Older trustees with many years of board experience. |
| Active in political party | Younger trustees, few years of board service, Democrats, strongly active in political party, liberal, from smaller states. |
| Financial support from organized groups | Younger trustees, few years of board service, Democrats, strongly active in political party. |
| Experience in education | Female, older, Democrat |
| Experience in business | Male, Republican, conservative |
| More exposure than other candidates | No differences |
| Weak or no opposition | Male, liberal, from a small state |
| Extensive campaign | Democrat, strong political party identification, from a large state |

Elected trustees reported financial support for their campaigns as follows: 52% from only their own funds; 37% from other individuals; 10% from employee organizations or unions, 4% from other interest groups, and 2% from political parties. However, both trustees in larger states and females, except for those using "their own" funds, had more different sources of financial support.

There were also a number of differences for why people were endorsed by some organization or group for the board campaign. Primarily, females and Democrats who identified strongly with their political parties were more likely to be endorsed by an employee organization, a union, or a political party.

### Accountability

Large majorities of both appointed and elected trustees felt they were very accountable to current students, the citizens of the college's region, future students, other members of the board and college employees.

Overall, appointed trustees checked they were accountable to "citizens of the state" and "regional/local governments" more often. There were few differences among appointed trustees based on demographics, except that females indicated they felt "very accountable" to many more groups than males did. These groups included governmental agencies at all levels, transfer colleges, and local businesses, and current and future students.

Elected trustees indicated higher degrees of accountability to more groups than did appointed trustees. However, within the elected group, trustees differed primarily on their level of "accountability to those who funded their campaigns." Those who indicated a higher degree of accountability to campaign funding sources included females, younger trustees, Democrats, and those trustees who identified strongly with their political party.

### Sources of Information

Trustees rely on a wide variety of sources for information and advice related to their decision making: college administrators, other trustees on the board, students, and college faculty members have the most influence, followed closely by individual community members, state associations, and ACCT. Elected trustees were somewhat more likely than appointed trustees to have a wider range of sources of information. There were not many differences among elected trustees as to whom they rely on for information and advice related to their decision making except for "employee associations/unions." Overall, 59% of elected trustees relied on these groups; however, females, trustees with less than five years on the board, Democrats, those with strong party identification and who consider themselves liberal tended to rely on employee associations or unions more than other elected trustees.

Among appointed trustees, females tended more than males to seek advice from more groups, including faculty, students, and trustee and community college associations. Males, more than females, sought advice from the people who appointed them and from other board members.

Approximately 22% of all trustees indicated that possible political implications have "some" or a "great deal of influence" on their votes on board decisions. Appointed trustees who are over 55 years of age, those who strongly identify with their political parties, and trustees from North Carolina were more inclined than other trustees to consider those implications. Among elected trustees, there were no demographic differences on sources of information.

## Involvement in the Political System

Trustees influence local, state and national policy by communicating with government officials and politicians, by being active in local elections and politics, and by planning to seek other political offices in the future.

Both appointed and elected trustees communicated most often with local officials and politicians (62-66% and 56-58% respectively). Appointed trustees are somewhat more likely than elected trustees to do so, while elected trustees are somewhat more likely to communicate with federal officials.

## Communication

Among appointed trustees, the most differences in communication were related to strength of political party identification and age. How appointed board members' communicate with politicians and government agency officials varies. Those trustees who strongly identify with their party tended to communicate more with local, state and federal politicians, and with city/county, state and federal agency officials compared to trustees who moderately or weakly identify with their parties. Older trustees tended to communicate more with federal officials.

Activity in politics and elections was different for appointed trustees based on political party membership, strength of political party identification, and whether trustees lived in North Carolina or other states. Democrats, trustees who strongly identify with their party, and trustees from North Carolina tended to be more active in local, state, and national politics and elections than others.

The results were similar among the elected trustees: the largest number of differences was based on political party identification. Communications with federal politicians increased if the board member was older, had many years of experience on the board, and strong political party identification. Communications with state agency officials increased if board members moderately identified with political party, had moderate political leanings, or were from a small state. Communications with local politicians and public office holders did not differ much based on the variables

included in this study. Political party membership made no difference in communications.

### Political Activity

About 70% of all trustees considered themselves active in local elections and politics. The comparative level of activity by the appointed and elected groups is similar; however, overall, appointed trustees are slightly more active than elected trustees in local and state politics and elections and more likely to have had prior experience seeking or serving in another office.

Political party membership and strength of party identification accounted for the most differences in how politically active an elected trustee is. Democrats who strongly identify with the party are most active in politics and elections at all levels.

Activity in politics and elections was different for appointed trustees related to political party membership, strength of political party identification, and whether trustees lived in North Carolina or other states. Democrats, trustees who strongly identify with their party, and trustees from North Carolina tended to be more active in local, state, and national politics and elections.

### Seeking Future Political Office

Less than 10% of the respondents indicated they might seek other political positions in the relatively near future, with elected trustees being slightly more interested in doing so than appointed trustees. Within that 10%, appointed trustees under age 55, trustees with less than four years of board experience, and board members who strongly identified with their party were more inclined to run for the state legislature in the future than other trustees.

Among elected trustees, the desire to seek other political office varied by gender, age, political party membership, and strength of identification with the party. Males, trustees under 55 years of age, and Democrats with strong party identification said they would be more inclined to seek other political office.

### Attitudes and Opinions

We asked a number of questions related to trustees opinions about involvement in politics, responsiveness to political pressures, quality of leadership, and use of the position as a step to other political office. We also asked about attitudes toward community college educators serving on governing boards. There were significant differences between elected and appointed trustees on a number of variables, as reported in an earlier study. (Whitman, 1987-88) There were also differences within each group.

Appointed trustees

Gender and political party membership were the variables accounting for the most differences on opinions and attitudes; political leaning and years on the board accounted for the fewest differences.

Attitudes toward the importance of trustee involvement with the national political scene exhibited more differences than attitudes toward the local or state political scenes. Women, trustees who identify strongly with their political party, and trustees from North Carolina indicated that involvement with this level is very important as opposed to the 51% of all appointed trustees.

Regarding beliefs that either appointed or elected trustees are more responsive to political pressure, the only variable with a significant difference was age. Younger trustees were more inclined to indicate that "elected trustees are more responsive to political pressures."

There were two variables that influenced trustee opinion about whether elected or appointed trustees provide better leadership for their colleges. Of the 36% of those who thought appointed trustees provided better leadership, males and Republicans were more inclined than females and Democrats or Independents to hold that opinion.

Differences on the question about whether or not a trustee's position should serve as a stepping stone to another political office were based on age and state. Overall, 81% said "no": trustees over age 55 and from North Carolina indicated "no" more often than younger trustees and those from other states.

More females than males, and newer board members more than established board members tended to support the opinions that former college employees should serve on board (supported by 32% of all appointed trustees) and that employees of one community college district should serve on another community college board (supported by 14% of appointed trustees).

Lastly, males, more than females, indicated that being a trustee was not political at all.

Elected trustees

Among elected trustees, most of the differences in this section were based on gender (9 items) and political party membership (8 items). The fewest number of differences were predicated on strength of political party identification and size of state (5 items each).

The importance of trustee involvement in the local, state, and national political scene produced the most differences on national level involvement. Generally,

females, Democrats, and trustees with strong political party identification opted for greater involvement at the national level.

Regarding trustee responsiveness to political pressures, males, older trustees, trustees with the longest tenure on boards, and trustees from smaller states believe appointed trustees, more than elected trustees, are responsive to political pressures. Viewing the trustee position as a stepping stone to another political office produced some differences of opinion. Younger trustees with fewer years on the board, Democrats, and liberals were more likely to view the position in that manner than other trustees.

Forty-one percent of elected trustees supported the notion of former college employees on a board and 22% supported having college employees from another college serve on a board. Within these groups, females, younger trustees, trustees with less time on the board, Democrats, and liberals tended to be more supportive compared to other trustees.

Interestingly, questions about campaign contributions produced significant differences based on every variable used in this study. Men, older trustees, trustees with over 10 years of board service, Republicans, those with strong party affiliation, conservatives, and trustees from small states were more likely to be "strongly opposed" to accepting campaign contributions from college employee association/unions or from individual college employees.

There were many differences in the responses related to whether or not being a trustee was a political position. The following chart indicates the trustees who were more likely to check the response indicated.

| **Table 12. Demographics Differences: Attitude about Political Nature of Position** | |
|---|---|
| **Response** | **Characteristics** |
| Not Political At All | Over age 55, Republican, conservative, small states |
| Slightly Political | Males |
| Somewhat Political | No differences |
| Often Political | Females, under age 55, Democrat, moderate |
| Very Political | Liberal, large states |

These results parallel other demographic results. While the differences are slight, younger trustees, females, Democratic and liberal trustees from large states tended to view the position as more political and to be accountable to and communicate with more groups. They may be more involved with those whom they view as their constituents.

## Conclusions

Overall, the results of the survey paint a healthy picture for trustee governance of America's community colleges. Trustees, whether appointed or elected, Republican or Democrat, are strongly motivated by the opportunity to provide service to their communities and the colleges and to improve programs for students. They have track records of prior community leadership. And they feel most accountable to the citizens of the college region and to current students at the colleges.

Many of the differences between elected and appointed trustees and between demographic characteristics within those groups represent only a small percentage of trustees. Many of the differences are attributed to strength of political party identification, age, length of service and gender.

While we caution against overgeneralization and note that there are many exceptions, the responses that reflect higher political activity or a more "activist" approach are from trustees who tend to be more involved in political parties, younger, female, and have fewer years of service on the board. Women and younger trustees were also more likely to feel accountable to or seek information from a wider variety of groups. These findings reflect perceptions that newer trustees may be more political and activist than those in the past (Boggs and Smith, 1997; Lazerson, 1997). While most trustees are not particularly political, newer ones may be, and those with many years of experience with governing boards are noting the difference.

Further evidence of the commitment of the trustees to their college governance responsibilities is reflected by the apparent lack of interest in the position as a stepping stone to other political office. While most would agree that this is positive in that trustees need to make their decisions based upon what is best for the colleges rather than what might enhance their personal political futures, there are some obvious advantages in having policy makers at local, state, and federal levels who know about community colleges. In many states, term limits are making it possible for people who have experience on school and community college boards to move into other positions. Having former trustees who understand the value and needs of community colleges in these influential positions, and who represent both major political parties, is beneficial when decisions that affect support or regulation of community colleges are made. Elected trustees report being somewhat more interested than appointed trustees in future political offices.

Responses to survey questions on accountability reveal important attitudes on the part of trustees. Both appointed and elected trustees identified that they were accountable to a significant extent to current students and citizens of the college's region (who are, in the minds of some, the "owners" of public community colleges). It is also significant that both groups of trustees saw an important need to be accountable to future students. This is a noteworthy finding since planning for the

future of the institution is one of the most important responsibilities that a board must assure be done well.

While appointed trustees reported significantly more prior experience in business, elected-trustees reported feeling slightly more accountable to businesses and other employers. In many areas of the country, community colleges are the most important providers of workforce education. Trustees, as policymakers, should reinforce the value of responding to the workforce and economic development needs of their communities.

Elected trustees reported that they were more likely to rely on information and advice from a greater variety of sources than appointed trustees. The most notable differences were that elected trustees were more likely than appointed trustees to rely on information from individual community members and employee associations or unions. While it is important for trustees to have a variety of sources of information, individual trustees must remember to reserve judgment on issues that come before the board until they are able to hear the recommendations and opinions that are presented in open board meetings.

A majority of both elected and appointed trustees also reported that they relied upon information and advice from both state and national trustee associations. These associations also serve trustees in many other ways, including orienting new trustees to their responsibilities and providing professional development opportunities. State and national conferences give trustees a chance to share best practices and to learn about emerging educational issues and policies that may affect their institutions.

Responses to the survey questions about communication and political activity reveal that both appointed and elected trustees are more active politically at the local level. State political activity and communication with state officials rank below similar activities at the local level with national or federal level activities and communications rating third for both groups. Since they govern the colleges of the community, these findings are not surprising. However, it is important for trustees to be involved in advocacy efforts at the state and national levels as well as at the local level. Policymakers at the state and federal level make decisions that significantly affect both the institutions and their students.

The strongest differences of opinion revealed by the survey were noted in the responses to the questions about the service of former college employees on boards and the practice of employees of one community college serving on the board of another community college. The respondents appeared divided about whether former employees of a college should serve as trustees of that institution. There was generally much less support for the service of employees of one college serving on the board of another. However, elected trustees were significantly more likely to be supportive of this practice. Trustees who are former employees of a college and those who serve as employees of another community college need to remember their governance role as

policymakers. Because of their knowledge of the operational aspects of a community college, there may be a temptation to become too involved in administrative decisions and processes. These roles are best left to the college administration and to the internal college governance processes. College employees may also seek out board members they know and have worked with to solve problems that are better addressed by the college administration. Trustees of public community colleges have the responsibilities of being objective representatives of the citizens of the community served by the college, to set the policies that govern it, and to see that it is effectively administered—not to be administrators.

Demographic differences among both appointed and elected trustees do impact trustee opinions. There differences are mainly healthy and desirable. For a long period of time, community college trustees have represented a particular, small segment of our society. Trustees historically were males, whites, upper middle-class, and well educated. Diversifying the ranks of trustees will bring about diverse opinions and judgements. Diversity helps avoid the pitfalls of "group think." Conversely, the diversity can make consensus difficult and can lead to bitter "board wars." Nevertheless since we are a diverse society, the lay people who govern our community colleges should reflect that diversity in innumerable ways.

Regardless of the varying opinions based on these selected demographics, trustees, whether female or male, young or old, Republican or Democrat, conservative or liberal, registered opinions, in this survey, considered highly desirable for governing our community colleges. They indicate that they put the college and its students before their own political ambitions and politics at either the local, state, or national levels.

Finally, the community college movement in the United States has changed and grown since 1901, when the oldest, existing public community college was established in Joliet, Illinois. Many community college observers applaud these changes while some other question the new directions. Yet for this vital segment of American higher education to remain relevant, boards must change and grow. Appointing or electing trustees with varying demographic characteristics will help our community colleges remain vibrant and vital partners in higher education. Differences in human characteristics, opinions, and beliefs are imperative in a democracy.

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### George Boggs

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# APPENDIX A: Local Governance Systems

This chart contains the information relevant to the Politics of Trustees Survey. The information on a state by state basis includes:

- The number of elected and appointed boards in each state.
- What determines whether a board is appointed or elected in states with both?
- The number (or range) of trustees on each board.
- Whether or not boards include student trustees.
- The total number of local trustees in each state.
- The number of surveys mailed directly to trustees (i.e. ACCT members)
- The number of surveys mailed to non-member districts
- The appointment process and authorities, including nomination, recommendation, appointment, and confirmation and ratification and whether political parties are officially involved.
- The electing process, including whether district wide or by area in the district, or mixed; and whether the elections are based on political party.

*General questions include:*
*Are tribal colleges included in the chart in all states with tribal colleges? Are private colleges included?*
*Are student trustees included in the ACCT data base? If so, were surveys sent to them? I so, which states have student trustees?*

| State | Elected / Appointed[1] | # of boards in the cat. | Appointment Process, including nomination, recommendation, appointment, ratification or confirmation | Election process | Formal political party involvement? | Size of boards | Total # of local trustees | Surveys to members[2] | Surveys to non-member boards |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alaska | A | 1 | Appointed by the mayor of the borough the college serves | - | | 11 | | 11 | 2 |
| Arizona | E | 10 | - | By CC district | | 5 | | 46 | 2 |

[1] Reported by state agency or association directors
[2] ***These are the number of trustees on ACCT member boards, they do not include student trustees.***

| State | Elected / Appointed[1] | # of boards in the cat. | Appointment Process, including nomination, recommendation, appointment, ratification or confirmation | Election process | Formal political party involvement? | Size of boards | Total # of local trustees | Surveys to members[2] | Surveys to non-member boards |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arkansas | A | 3 | Colleges that are part of a 4-year system and Technical Colleges have boards that are appointed by the Governor. | - | | 10 | | 137 | 1 |
| | E | 16 | - | Elected locally by taxing districts | | 7-10 | | | |
| California | E | 72 | - | By local voters | No | 5-7 (1 nine) | 442 | 393 | |
| Colorado | E | 3 | - | By local voters | | 5-7 | | 16 | 0 |
| Florida | A | 28 | By governor; ratified by the State Board of Education; confirmed by the State Senate. | - | | 7-11 | | 226 | 1 |
| Georgia | A | 36 | Appointed by the State Board of Technical and Adult Education | - | | 6-11 | | 45 | 33 |
| Idaho | E | 2 | - | Elected countywide from the county which the college is in. | | 5 | | 10 | 0 |
| Illinois | A | 1 | Mayor of Chicago appoints for the city board | | | 6 | | 324 | 1 |

| State | Elected / Appointed[1] | # of boards in the cat. | Appointment Process, including nomination, recommendation, appointment, ratification or confirmation | Election process | Formal political party involvement? | Size of boards | Total # of local trustees | Surveys to members[2] | Surveys to non-member boards |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | E | 39 | | Election within CC district. Student trustees elected by various methods. | Elections are nonpartisan | 5-10 | | | |
| Indiana | A | 2 | By Governor | - | | 12 | | 12 | 1 |
| Iowa | E | 15 | - | Elected from a "director district" within a CC district. | | 7-9 | | 125 | 0 |
| Kansas | E | 19 | - | Elected from local taxing district | | 5-8 | | 107 | 2 |
| Kentucky | A | 14 | Governor appoints based on recommendations from a nominating commission | - | | 8 | | 6 | 13 |
| Maryland | A | 15 | 1 board by mayor of Baltimore<br>Other boards by governor | - | | 7-10 | | 151 | 2 |
| Massachusetts | A | 15 | By governor | - | | 7-12 | | 127 | 4 |
| Michigan | E | 28 | - | By local voters | | 6-8 | | 195 | 1 |
| Mississippi | A | 13 | Local government officials—board of supervisors | - | | 5-30 | | 234 | 2 |
| Missouri | E | 12 | - | Elected within a "director district" within a CC district. | | 6 | | 69 | 1 |
| Montana | E | 10 | - | By local voters | | 6-7 | | 14 | 8 |

| State | Elected / Appointed[1] | # of boards in the cat. | Appointment Process, including nomination, recommendation, appointment, ratification or confirmation | Election process | Formal political party involvement? | Size of boards | Total # of local trustees | Surveys to members[2] | Surveys to non-member boards |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nebraska | E | 7 | - | 10 elected by district, 1 is elected at-large by CC district. | | 8-12 | | 66 | 1 |
| New Jersey | A | 19 | Most boards have 11 members, 2 are appointed by the Governor, 9 by county freeholds and the County Supt of Schools is a member | - | | 9-14 | | 226 | 1 |
| New Mexico | A | 3 | Appointed by the governor if the college is constitutionally established | - | | 5-10 | | 63 | 4 |
| | E | 9 | | Elected if the college is statutorily established | | 5-8 | | | |
| New York | A | 30 | 5 members by local sponsor (usually county legislators or town supervisors), 4 by governor | 1 student trustee elected by students | | 8-15 | | 258 | 5 |
| North Carolina | A | 58 | 4 members appointed by governor, 4 by county commissioners, 4 by local board of education | - | | 12<br>9-17 | | 763 | 0 |

| State | Elected / Appointed[1] | # of boards in the cat. | Appointment Process, including nomination, recommendation, appointment, ratification or confirmation | Election process | Formal political party involvement? | Size of boards | Total # of local trustees | Surveys to members[2] | Surveys to non-member boards |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| West Virginia | A | 2 | By college president with the advice and consent of the state governing board | - | | | | 11 | 2 |
| Wisconsin | A | 17 | Local appt comprised of either district school board presidents or county board chairpersons | - | | 7-16 | | 151 | 1 |
| Wyoming | E | 7 | - | Elected by CC district | | 7-8 | | 43 | 1 |

| State | Elected / Appointed[1] | # of boards in the cat. | Appointment Process, including nomination, recommendation, appointment, ratification or confirmation | Election process | Formal political party involvement? | Size of boards | Total # of local trustees | Surveys to members[2] | Surveys to non-member boards |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| North Dakota | Mix (Tribal colleges) | 5 | Varies – usually a combination of appt by the tribal council and the tribal chair | Varies – usually election by tribal members | | | | 8 | 0 |
| Ohio | A | 23 | Six members are appointed by county commissioners, 3 by the Governor | - | | 6-10 | | 168 | 4 |
| Oklahoma | A | 12 | Governor appoints | - | | 7 | | 40 | 6 |
| Oregon | E | 15 | - | By CC district | | 7-8 | | 86 | 4 |
| Pennsylvania | A | 18 | Appointed by local sponsors, which can be counties (county commissioners), sponsoring school districts (school boards) or local cities (mayor or city council). | - | | 14-16 | | 234 | 2 |
| South Carolina | A | 16 | Governor | - | | 7-15 | | 129 | 3 |
| Texas | E | 56 | - | By CC district | | 4-14 | | 329 | 12 |
| Virginia | A | 5 | Board of Supervisors and/or City Council for the CC's service region appoint board members | - | | 11-14 | | 65 | 0 |
| Washington | A | 31 | By governor | - | | 4-5 | | 144 | 2 |

# THE POLITICS OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEESHIP

Please help us learn about community college trustees by responding to the following survey. It will take 10-15 minutes to complete.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the political aspects of community college trusteeship. The study is sponsored by ACCT, and is conducted by George Boggs, President, Palomar College; Cindra Smith, Director of Education Services, Community College League of California; and Bill Piland, Professor of Education, San Diego State University.

For each question, please completely shade in the circle that corresponds to the response that best reflects your knowledge and opinion. **Shade circles like this:** ● **Not like this:** ⊗ ✓

## *Demographic Profile*

1. Your state: _____

2. Gender: O Male O Female

3. Age:
   O Under 35 O 45 - 54 O 65 or over
   O 35 - 44 O 55 - 64

4. How many years, including the present, have you served on the college board?
   O 0 - 4 O 10 - 14 O 20 or over
   O 5 - 9 O 15 - 19

5. How are you registered to vote?
   O Republican O Independent
   O Democrat O Other (please specify):_____

6. How strongly do you identify with your political party?
   O strongly
   O moderately
   O weakly
   O not at all

7. How would you characterize yourself politically?
   O strongly liberal
   O somewhat liberal
   O moderate
   O somewhat conservative
   O strongly conservative

## *Elections and Campaigns*

8. Please rate each of the following as motivations for why you sought election to the community college board.

| | *Not important* | *Somewhat important* | *Very important* |
|---|---|---|---|
| a. to serve the community | O N | O S | O V |
| b. to serve the college(s) | O N | O S | O V |
| c. to improve programs for students | O N | O S | O V |
| d. to address a problem in the institution | O N | O S | O V |
| e. to strengthen my ties to the person or group that supported me | O N | O S | O V |
| f. to experience political office | O N | O S | O V |
| g. to gain visibility in the community | O N | O S | O V |
| h. to prepare for other political office | O N | O S | O V |
| i. other (specify):_____ | O N | O S | O V |

9. Were you approached by representatives from a political party or interest group (for example, employee union, chamber of commerce, religious group, etc.) to run for the Board?
   O Yes. If yes, please identify:_____
   O No



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10. Are candidates for the board endorsed by political party committees, leaders, or caucuses?
- O Yes, they must go through an official process.
- O Yes, but the process is informal and unofficial.
- O Some board candidates, but not all, seek support from political parties.
- O No, there is no political party involvement.

11. Looking back, how would you assess the level of opposition for your seat on the board in your campaigns?
- O no opposition
- O weak opposition
- O strong opposition
- O opposition varied from election to election

12. Which methods have you used in your campaign(s) for the board? (Select all that apply.)
- O telephoning constituents
- O walking precincts
- O letters to the editor
- O flyers and/or posters
- O mass mailing
- O buy space or time in newspapers, radio, or TV
- O other (please specify):_____

13. Was your most recent candidacy for the board endorsed by: (Select all that apply.)
- O a local or regional newspaper
- O an employee organization or union
- O a political party
- O a special interest group (please specify):_____
- O not endorsed

14. Did you accept financial support for your candidacy in any campaign from: (Select all that apply.)
- O an employee organization or union
- O a political party
- O a special interest group (please specify:)_____
- O individuals
- O only my own funds were used

15. What are the reasons that most closely match why you believe you were elected. (Select all that apply.)
- O prior leadership in the community
- O active in political party
- O financial support from organized groups
- O experience in education
- O experience in business
- O more exposure than other candidates
- O weak or no opposition
- O extensive campaign

*Political Activity*

16. About how many times a year do you communicate with the following groups regarding college matters?

| | *Never (0 times)* | *Rarely (1-3)* | *Sometimes (4-6)* | *Frequently (7+)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. local elected politicians | O N | O R | O S | O F |
| b. state elected politicians | O N | O R | O S | O F |
| c. federal elected politicians | O N | O R | O S | O F |
| d. city or county officials | O N | O R | O S | O F |
| e. state agency officials | O N | O R | O S | O F |
| f. federal agency officials | O N | O R | O S | O F |

17. How active are you in:

| | *Not Active* | *Somewhat Active* | *Very Active* |
|---|---|---|---|
| a. local politics | O N | O S | O V |
| b. local elections | O N | O S | O V |
| c. state politics | O N | O S | O V |
| d. state elections | O N | O S | O V |
| e. national politics | O N | O S | O V |
| f. national elections | O N | O S | O V |

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17. Have you sought or served in other elected or appointed offices prior to your service on the college board?

O yes O no

18. What other political positions might you seek in the next six or so years? (Select all that apply.)

O city or town council
O county government board
O state legislator
O state executive branch
O Congress
O other (please specify):_____
O none

*Board/Community/College Relations*

19. Please rank the level of accountability you feel to each of the following.

| | *Not accountable* | *Somewhat accountable* | *Very accountable* |
|---|---|---|---|
| a. appointing authority | O N | O S | O V |
| b. those who supported your appointment | O N | O S | O V |
| c. federal government | O N | O S | O V |
| d. state government | O N | O S | O V |
| e. citizens of the state | O N | O S | O V |
| f. regional and local governments | O N | O S | O V |
| g. citizens of the college's region | O N | O S | O V |
| h. transfer colleges and universities | O N | O S | O V |
| i. businesses and other employers | O N | O S | O V |
| j. current students | O N | O S | O V |
| k. college employees | O N | O S | O V |
| l. other members of the board | O N | O S | O V |
| m. future students | O N | O S | O V |
| n. other (specify):_____ | O N | O S | O V |

20. Which of the above groups is the governing board most accountable to? (Print the letter of the group.) ☐

21. To what extent do you rely on the following for information and advice related to your decision-making as a board member

| | *Not much* | *Somewhat* | *Very much* |
|---|---|---|---|
| a. the individual or body that appointed you to the board | O N | O S | O V |
| b. individuals or groups that supported your appointment | O N | O S | O V |
| c. individual community members | O N | O S | O V |
| d. college administrators | O N | O S | O V |
| e. employee associations or unions | O N | O S | O V |
| f. college faculty members | O N | O S | O V |
| g. students | O N | O S | O V |
| h. other trustees on the board | O N | O S | O V |
| i. the state trustee or college association | O N | O S | O V |
| j. ACCT (Association of Community College Trustees) | O N | O S | O V |
| k. AACC (American Association of Community Colleges) | O N | O S | O V |
| l. other (specify):_____ | O N | O S | O V |



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22. How much influence, typically, do possible political implications have on your votes on board decisions?

O no influence O little influence O some influence O great deal of influence

*Opinions and Attitudes*

23. How important is it for trustees to be involved in the following in order to assist the college?

| | *Not important* | *Somewhat important* | *Very important* |
|---|---|---|---|
| a. local political scene | O N | O S | O V |
| b. state political scene | O N | O S | O V |
| c. national political scene | O N | O S | O V |

24. Which of the following most closely reflects your beliefs:

O Appointed trustees are more responsive to political pressure than elected trustees.
O Elected trustees are more responsive to political pressure than appointed trustees.
O Appointed and elected trustees are equally responsive to political influence.

25. Which of the following most closely reflects your beliefs:

O Appointed boards of trustees provide better leadership for the college than elected boards
O Elected boards of trustees provide better leadership for the college than appointed boards
O The quality of leadership does not depend on whether the board is appointed or elected.

26. Should your position as a trustee serve as a stepping stone to another political office?

O yes O no O not sure

27. What is your attitude toward the practice of <u>former</u> college employees serving on their college boards?

O strongly support O support O undecided O oppose O strongly oppose

28. What is your attitude toward the practice of employees of one community college serving on another community college board?

O strongly support O support O undecided O oppose O strongly oppose

29. Being a community college trustee is:

O not political at all O slightly political O somewhat political O often political O very political

**Thank you very much.**

**Please use the enclosed envelope to return the survey by February 28, 2000 to:**

**Palomar College**
**1140 W. Mission Rd.**
**San Marcos, CA**
**92069-1487**

**Attn: Dr. Robert Barr, Director of Institutional Research & Planning**
**Phone: (760)744-1150 ext. 2360**

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APPENDIX: B



## THE POLITICS OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEESHIP

Please help us learn about community college trustees by responding to the following survey. It will take 10-15 minutes to complete.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the political aspects of community college trusteeship. The study is sponsored by ACCT, and is conducted by George Boggs, President, Palomar College; Cindra Smith, Director of Education Services, Community College League of California; and Bill Piland, Professor of Education, San Diego State University.

For each question, please completely shade in the circle that corresponds to the response that best reflects your knowledge and opinion. **Shade circles like this:** ● **Not like this:** ⊘ ✓

### *Demographic Profile*

1. Your state:_____

2. Gender: O Male O Female

3. Age:
   O Under 35 O 45 - 54 O 65 or over
   O 35 - 44 O 55 - 64

4. How many years, including the present, have you served on the college board?
   O 0 - 4 O 10 - 14 O 20 or over
   O 5 - 9 O 15 - 19

5. How many times have you been appointed (or reappointed) to serve on your board?
   O 1 O 3 O over 4
   O 2 O 4

6. How are you registered to vote?
   O Republican O Independent
   O Democrat O Other (please specify):_____

7. How strongly do you identify with your political party?
   O strongly
   O moderately
   O weakly
   O not at all

8. How would you characterize yourself politically?
   O strongly liberal
   O somewhat liberal
   O moderate
   O somewhat conservative
   O strongly conservative

### *Appointment Process*

9. Please rate each of the following as motivations for why you sought or accepted appointment to the community college board.

| | *Not important* | *Somewhat important* | *Very important* |
|---|---|---|---|
| a. to serve the community | O N | O S | O V |
| b. to serve the college(s) | O N | O S | O V |
| c. to improve programs for students | O N | O S | O V |
| d. to address a problem in the institution | O N | O S | O V |
| e. to strengthen my ties to the person or group that appointed me | O N | O S | O V |
| f. to experience political office | O N | O S | O V |
| g. to gain visibility in the community | O N | O S | O V |
| h. to prepare for other political office | O N | O S | O V |
| i. other (specify):_____ | O N | O S | O V |

10. Which individual or agency do you think had the most influence in your appointment to the board?
    O Governor
    O state department of education official
    O state legislator
    O county or regional government official
    O other (please specify):_____
    O city or town government official
    O county board of education
    O political party committee

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11. How important was support from the following in being appointed?

| | *Not important* | *Somewhat important* | *Very important* |
|---|---|---|---|
| a. community leaders | O N | O S | O V |
| b. political party leadership | O N | O S | O V |
| c. college administration | O N | O S | O V |
| d. state legislators | O N | O S | O V |
| e. other (specify):_____ | O N | O S | O V |

12. Did you face competition from the other potential appointees for your seat on the board?

O no competition
O somewhat competitive
O very competitive

13. What are the reasons that most closely match why you believe you were appointed? (Select all that apply.)

O prior leadership in community
O active in political party of appointing authority
O prior relationship with appointing authority
O recommendations from people with connections to appointing authority
O experience in education
O experience in business
O recommendations from other board members and college personnel
O made contributions to the party or campaign of the appointing authority

14. Was your candidacy for appointment supported or endorsed by: (Select all that apply.)

O a local or regional newspaper
O an employee organization or union
O a political party
O a special interest group (please specify):_____
O not endorsed

*Political Activity*

15. About how many times a year do you communicate with the following groups regarding college matters?

| | *Never (0 times)* | *Rarely (1-3)* | *Sometimes (4-6)* | *Frequently (7+)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. local elected politicians | O N | O R | O S | O F |
| b. state elected politicians | O N | O R | O S | O F |
| c. federal elected politicians | O N | O R | O S | O F |
| d. city or county officials | O N | O R | O S | O F |
| e. state agency officials | O N | O R | O S | O F |
| f. federal agency officials | O N | O R | O S | O F |

16. How active are you in:

| | *Not Active* | *Somewhat Active* | *Very Active* |
|---|---|---|---|
| a. local politics | O N | O S | O V |
| b. local elections | O N | O S | O V |
| c. state politics | O N | O S | O V |
| d. state elections | O N | O S | O V |
| e. national politics | O N | O S | O V |
| f. national elections | O N | O S | O V |

18. Have you sought or served in other elected or appointed offices prior to your service on the college board?

O yes O no

19. What other political positions might you seek in the next six or so years? (Select all that apply.)

O city or town council
O county government board
O state legislature
O state executive branch
O Congress
O other (please specify):_____
O none

*Board/Community/College Relationship*

20. Please rank the level of accountability you feel to each of the following.

| | *Not accountable* | *Somewhat accountable* | *Very accountable* |
|---|---|---|---|
| a. voters | O N | O S | O V |
| b. those who funded your campaign | O N | O S | O V |
| c. Federal government | O N | O S | O V |
| d. State government | O N | O S | O V |
| e. citizens of the state | O N | O S | O V |
| f. regional and local governments | O N | O S | O V |
| g. citizens of the college's region | O N | O S | O V |
| h. transfer colleges and universities | O N | O S | O V |
| i. businesses and other employers | O N | O S | O V |
| j. current students | O N | O S | O V |
| k. college employees | O N | O S | O V |
| l. other members of the board | O N | O S | O V |
| m. future students | O N | O S | O V |
| n. other (specify):_____ | O N | O S | O V |

21. Which of the above groups is the governing board most accountable to? (Print the letter of the group.) ☐

22. To what extent do you rely on the following for information and advice related to your decision-making as a board member?

| | *Not much* | *Somewhat* | *Very much* |
|---|---|---|---|
| a. those who funded your campaign | O N | O S | O V |
| b. individual community members | O N | O S | O V |
| c. college administrators | O N | O S | O V |
| d. employee associations or unions | O N | O S | O V |
| e. college faculty members | O N | O S | O V |
| f. students | O N | O S | O V |
| g. other trustees on the board | O N | O S | O V |
| h. the state trustee or college association | O N | O S | O V |
| i. ACCT (Association of Community College Trustees) | O N | O S | O V |
| j. AACC (American Association of Community Colleges) | O N | O S | O V |
| k. other (specify):_____ | O N | O S | O V |



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23. How much influence, typically, do possible political implications have on your votes on board decisions?
O no influence O little influence O some influence O great deal of influence

*Opinions and Attitudes*

24. How important is it for trustees to be involved in the following in order to assist the college?

| | *Not important* | *Somewhat important* | *Very important* |
|---|---|---|---|
| a. local political scene | O N | O S | O V |
| b. state political scene | O N | O S | O V |
| c. national political scene | O N | O S | O V |

25. Which of the following most closely reflects your beliefs:
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O The quality of leadership does not depend on whether the board is appointed or elected.

27. Should your position as a trustee serve as a stepping stone to another political office?
O yes O no O not sure

28. What is your attitude toward the practice of former college employees serving on their college boards?
O strongly support O support O undecided O oppose O strongly oppose

29. What is your attitude toward the practice of employees of one community college serving on another community college board?
O strongly support O support O undecided O oppose O strongly oppose

30. What is your attitude toward the practice of accepting campaign contributions from college employee associations or unions when seeking election to the college board?
O strongly support O support O undecided O oppose O strongly oppose

31. What is your attitude toward the practice of accepting campaign contributions from individual college employees when seeking election to the college board?
O strongly support O support O undecided O oppose O strongly oppose

32. Being a community college trustee is:
O not political at all O slightly political O somewhat political O often political O very political

**Thank you very much.**
**Please use the enclosed envelope to return the survey by February 28, 2000 to:**
**Palomar College**
**1140 W. Mission Rd.**
**San Marcos, CA**
**92069-1487**
**Attn: Dr. Robert Barr, Director of Institutional Research & Planning**
**Phone: (760)744-1150 ext. 2360**

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